

Letter from the Editor - April 1996

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Many thanks to members and nonmember readers of the Journal who sent in these Letters to the Editor.

Since our publication of the Special Issue on Death and Dying (December 1996), I continue to receive concerned letters. Never in the 56-year history of our Journal have we received so many letters on one subject. Please do continue to send those letter on D.A.D.D.-Doctor-Assisted Death with Dignity. All letters will be published with the approval of the writer - anonymously if you wish.

As A.A. "Bud" Smyser, a valuable member of our Governor's Blue-Ribbon Panel on Living and Dying with Dignity, stated in his "Hawaii World" (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, March 6, 1997): "I hope we and the community can retain our civility as we debate."

April is Donor Family Decision Month

April is "Donor Family Decision Month" in Hawaii proclaimed by Governor Ben Cayetano on March 25.

The Organ Donor Center of Hawaii wants to encourage families to discuss the option of organ, tissue and eye donation amongst themselves, and then to decide what their future actions will be and to make that commitment during the month of April.

Elliot I. Alvarado, the Executive Director of the Organ Center of Hawaii has submitted the following article for our Journal. His wife Peggy Strieper MD is a pediatric cardiologist.

Every physician should read his article and participate personally and with family members and promote the Organ Donor Center via our offices. Call the center at 599-7630 for information.

Congratulations on publishing an excellent *HMJ* on issues of Death and Dying. There are many issues that do not have right or wrong answers (my opinion). My position is to offer medication to control pain, even if it increases the risk of lethal side effects.

I have problems with passing a law to assist patient suicide. I am not concerned about the ethical doctor, the ethical patient and the patient's ethical family. I am concerned when any in the above group are "slipshod" and only wish to resolve their personal problem immediately.

For example, my mother had a stroke at age 91 years. For months, it appeared the end was imminent for her. She is now nearly completely recovered, and at age 95 is still coherent and enjoys her friends.

Carl W. Lehman MD

Regardless of how warmly and fuzzily doctor-assisted suicide is clothed by its proponents, it is still murder and against every ethical and moral component of physician training (not to mention the commandment of our Maker).

I am constantly amazed that physicians who can assist in child-birth and the saving of human life, can support the killing of that same human being in later years. It will be a sad day in medicine if doctors are looked on as killers (I'll not mince words) rather than healers.

William F. Moore, Jr. MD

I was pleased to read in the *Hawaii Medical Journal* about the Blue Ribbon Panel to study the issue of Death with Dignity. The special edition of the Journal which you edited on Death with Dignity was a great contribution. Congratulations on an outstanding job! It is unfortunate the AMA has taken such a reactionary stance. Hopefully, Hawaii can eventually move ahead with legislation that will address this issue.

Byron A. Eliashof MD

I would like to congratulate you on the excellent Death and Dying issue of the *Hawaii Medical Journal*. It is about time that the medical profession begin to talk honestly about this subject. Good doctors have quietly helped suffering patients end their lives to relieve suffering since the beginning of our profession. The pronouncements of the American Medical Association on this issue are essentially political. Keep up the good work. Thanks to the Hemlock Society Ad in the *Journal*, I have been able to make contact with the Hawaii organization.

William B. Wenner MD



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